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COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
First session
29 March-8 April 1993
Agenda item 16

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS FIRST SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Denis A. DAVIS

Action taken by the Committee

Matters arising from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in the field of water resources

(Agenda item 7)

At the __ meeting, on __ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

A key feature of the Committee on Natural Resources is that it is concerned with the availability and sustainability of resources. This involves the assessment of how resource needs can be met in the context of other requirements for land utilization and environmental conservation. In view of the overwhelming importance of water as a main carrier in the biochemical cycle, an ecosystems approach requires a detailed inventory of biological data, in particular with regard to fisheries, water-borne diseases, eutrophication and biological indicators.

A holistic approach to water and land management, as emphasized in Agenda 21, requires the integration of water and soil strategies. Soil is also a resource for minerals and for natural ecosystems, as well as for agriculture. It therefore seems appropriate that the Committee on Natural Resources should interpret its mandate as including the interrelationship between soil and water resources, and the need for the integration of land and water management issues; and that such issues be included in the agenda of future meetings of the Committee.

The Committee considers that a holistic approach would imply that an initial problem diagnosis should be made for every major catchment/river basin, taking a medium-term perspective, of all the main issues of, hazards from, and man-induced influences on, the waters passing through the catchment basis above and below the ground, including an analysis of how crucial problems may be overcome and what administrative, financial and legislative measures, and what incentives might be needed to solve these problems.

The Committee recognizes that the achievement of the objectives contained in Agenda 21 will require the establishment of priorities for action at the national level, and the support of the international community. The achievement of these objectives will necessitate the marshalling of substantial financial resources. Consequently, the Committee supports the concept of additional concessional financing to be made available for this purpose.

In view of ASCEND 21, chapters 31 and 35 of Agenda 21, and of the Paris Declaration of the recent United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/World Meteorological Organization/International Council of Scientific Unions International Conference on Hydrology, "Towards the 21st Century: Research and Operational Needs", held in Paris from 22 to 26 March 1993, the Committee stresses the importance of furthering communication between the scientific and technological community on the one hand, and decision makers and the public on the other. It recommends that the presentation of results from scientific developments should be adjusted to the requirements of the decision-making processes, in order to optimize their benefits.

The Committee recognizes that due to variations in local conditions, it would be impossible to generate at short notice general priorities of activities relative to chapter 18 of Agenda 21. Nevertheless, immediate action is needed in view of high rates of population growth and their impact on land and water resources.

In view of the above considerations, the Committee recommends:

(a) That the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with the regional commissions, and in consultation with the organizations of the United Nations system, be requested to submit to the Committee on Natural Resources, at its second session, a status report on action taken by Governments in each region concerning integrated water resources development and management, and constraints and obstacles encountered in their efforts. Particular attention should be given to activities concerning the development of systematic knowledge based on the collection and dissemination of data on common standards; the assessment of water resources; the identification of water demand and of patterns in the allocation of water resources; integrated management of water and land resources for food production and rural development; flood and drought management, including risk analysis and environmental and social impact assessment; institutional issues; issues related to human resources; research and development and technology transfer; capacity-building and training; the allocation of financial resources; and public awareness and

participation. The report should also consider issues related to the integrated management of land and water resources;

(b) That the Secretary-General prepare a report on institutional and legal issues related to integrated water resources management, taking into consideration the work carried out by non-governmental organizations, such as the International Association for Water Law;

(c) That the Economic and Social Council recommend to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Meteorological Organization that they take necessary steps to promote a dialogue between members of the scientific community and decision makers, in which decision makers provide guidelines with regard to relevant fields of research that would enable them to improve their management of water for sustainable development, and scientists provide information on developments and possibilities of research that could be of value for the solution of management problems.